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Gary Fincke

THE HALF-DREAM OF THE DOLPHIN

*The brain of the dolphin shuts down one hemisphere at a time.*

My sister tells me the portrait is free,  
That she wants, for once, a professional lens  
To seal us together; and, in this dream  
The blessing of excuses is so muted  
I go without debating, early off  
The elevator with luminous families  
Who clutch coupons, file to floodlights and patter  
While I stand and sit, stand and sit, stand and see  
Our mother, years dead, climbing the stairs, silent,  
Refusing support, and I want to shout,  
“Slowly!” or “Go back!” or curse my sister,  
The nurse, who believes the dreamed have no disease,  
Doesn’t see the picture that must be taken  
Is this shot of our mother on the stairs  
Repeating soft *nos* to her heart, ignoring  
The curfew on her image until she sits  
Slack-mouthed and sideways on the mall’s last landing.  
Instead of speaking, my sister blinks out.  
Instead of acting, I wake to the sleepless  
Half of dying, to believing someone  
Has sense in the sequel, the lost episode  
With the studio downstairs, the descent  
Through the sea-chapter of sleep to that depth  
Where, just before memory goes dark, it stays  
Another moment, convincingly bright.